

MAG039 – Case #0120606 – “Infestation”

[CLICK]

[WRITHING WORM SOUNDS]

SASHA

What are you doing?!

ARCHIVIST

Almost...

SASHA

Leave it, it's not—

ARCHIVIST

I got it!

[PULLS SOMETHING FROM THE MORASS]

MARTIN

Guys? Is everyth— OH CHRIST!

ARCHIVIST

Shut up and get the extinguishers!

MARTIN

What?

ARCHIVIST

The CO₂! Get the goddamn CO₂!

MARTIN

Right, right, right, right, right, right, right, right,
yep.

ARCHIVIST

NOW!

[WRITHING CONTINUES AS EXTINGUISHER
SPRAYS]

MARTIN

There's too many...

SASHA

Just keep spraying!

ARCHIVIST

We need to go!

SASHA

Where?

ARCHIVIST

Uh... Uh...

SASHA

Damn!

ARCHIVIST

I just... uh... let, let me think!

SASHA

Do you see Prentiss? If we could get her—

MARTIN

I, I, I don't see her! I don't see her! I don't see her! I don't see her!

ARCHIVIST

Uhhh...

SASHA

John?

John!?

MARTIN

This way!

Come on! Come this way! This way, this way!

[RUNNING, PURSUED BY WORMS]

ARCHIVIST

Erm...

LOOK OUT!

[CRASH]

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

[SOUND CUTS IN MIDWAY THROUGH THE
ARCHIVIST SCREAMING]

MARTIN

And... there we go. Recording again.

Did you get it?

[PAINED CRY FROM ARCHIVIST AS SASHA
EXTRACTS WORM WITH A SQUELCH]

SASHA

There. And I just want to point out that I didn't
make this much of a fuss.

ARCHIVIST

[Breathing heavily, aggrieved tone] I think your
removal was substantially cleaner.

SASHA

I'm still not sure why you have this. Drinking in
the archives?

MARTIN

What? No, no, it's for worms.

ARCHIVIST

What?

MARTIN

For pulling the worms out of people. Like now.

SASHA

You, er... what?

MARTIN

I used to carry around a knife, but I started thinking that, well, cutting into someone laterally wasn't really the most efficient way to get them out, and besides which, they seem to be quite slow burrowing in a straight line so, given their size, th-the corkscrew just seemed to be the better option.

...

Look, you guys got to go home every day, okay. I didn't! I've been thinking for a long time about what to do when... well, y'know, *this* happens.

ARCHIVIST

[Softly] Well... thank you.

SASHA

That's why we're here?

MARTIN

Yeah. The room's sealed, I checked it myself when I moved in.

ARCHIVIST

Climate controlled, as well. Strong door. Soundproof. [Sigh] These old files are far better protected than we ever were. Alright, I'll grant you it's a good place to lay low, but—

SASHA

They could still come in through the air con.

ARCHIVIST

Not easily. And... not en masse. It is actually safe.

MARTIN

Ha!

ARCHIVIST

Except, of course, that we're trapped.

MARTIN

Ah... yeah.

Sorry.

...

SASHA

Why record it?

ARCHIVIST

What?

SASHA

Before, in the office. It, it was stupid going for the tape recorder like that, and then when you dropped it out there—

ARCHIVIST

I said I was sorry. If I'd known Martin had another one stashed in here, I never would have...

SASHA

No, it's, it's fine, just... I just don't understand. I thought you hated the damn thing. You're always going on about it.

ARCHIVIST

I do! I did. I just... I don't want to become a mystery. I refuse to become another goddamn mystery.

SASHA

What?

ARCHIVIST

Look, even if you ignore the walking soil-sack out there, and the fact that we are probably minutes from death, there is still so much more happening here.

MARTIN

I'm not sure we can really ignore the—

ARCHIVIST

Every *real* statement just leads... deeper into something I don't even know the shape of yet.

And to top it all, I still don't know what happened to Gertrude. Officially she's still missing, but Elias is no help and the police were pretty clear that the wait to call her dead is just a formality. If I die, wormfood or... something else, whatever, I'm going to make damn sure the same doesn't happen to me. Whoever takes over from me is going to know *exactly* what happened.

SASHA

You don't think that would... put them off?

ARCHIVIST

[Bitter laugh] I hope so. Only an idiot would stay in this job.

MARTIN

[Chuckles] Wouldn't that make you an idiot?

ARCHIVIST

Yes, Martin, that was my point.

...

SASHA

Can you see what's going on out there?

MARTIN

Ish. When did we last clean these doors?

ARCHIVIST

What can you see?

MARTIN

Worms seem to have backed off a bit. There's a few lurking in the corners. Ooh, ooh hey, there's the other tape recorder!

SASHA

Any sign of Prentiss?

MARTIN

No. No, it looks like they're... waiting, I think.

ARCHIVIST

For what?

MARTIN

I don't know. Tim, maybe?

SASHA

Oh god!

MARTIN

I think he was out at lunch.

SASHA

Quick, someone call him. Tell him not to come back inside.

ARCHIVIST

There's no signal in here. We just have to hope he heard the noise.

...

SASHA

John, what did you mean by "real statements"?

ARCHIVIST

You know what I mean. The ones that have weird wrinkles, or that just seem to have something solid to them. They all have one thing in common.

SASHA

They don't record digitally.

ARCHIVIST

And we have to use the tape recorder. At this stage, if it records to my laptop I almost don't bother. I don't—

MARTIN

There! There, there, there! I see him!

ARCHIVIST

What?

MARTIN

Tim. Tim's outside.

SASHA

Oh god, he doesn't know. He doesn't see them.

[SASHA AND MARTIN BOTH START CALLING OUT TO TIM]

TIM, LOOK OUT!

ARCHIVIST

It's soundproofed. He can't hear you!

SASHA

What is he doing? No, Tim, just run! Leave it alone!

MARTIN

Oh no, no, no, no...

SASHA

Turn around. Just turn around.

MARTIN

Oh god. There she is, there she is.

ARCHIVIST

[Muttering] There's nothing we can do.

SASHA

Ah, screw this.

ARCHIVIST

What, Sasha, NO!

[DOOR OPENS]

SASHA

Tim, look out!

ARCHIVIST

Watch out for the tape—

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

TIM

...still working? Ah, okay. Test, test. What are you doing on the floor? Huh. [Imitates Archivist voice]
Statement of Joe Spooky, regarding sinister happenings in the downtown old—

[DOOR OPENS]

SASHA

Tim, look out!

[WORM SOUND INTENSIFIES]

TIM

Sasha?

SASHA

Behind you! Run!

TIM

Oh...

PRENTISS

[Slowly intoning over worm sound] Do you hear their song?

SASHA

TIM!

[IMPACT, WORMS AND SCUFFLING]

[SASHA BREATHING HEAVILY AS SHE STUMBLES THROUGH DOORS]

SASHA

Damn it!

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

ARCHIVIST

Right. There we go. Martin, what do you see?

MARTIN

Hm? What?

ARCHIVIST

I can't really stand up yet. I need you to describe what's going on. For the record.

MARTIN

Ah, yeah. Sure. So, um, Sasha tackled Tim and there was kind of a struggle, but she made it out of the Archives. That, that was about two minutes ago and she's gone to get help. P-Probably. I mean, she, she couldn't... she wouldn't just run so...

ARCHIVIST

Did it look like any of the worms... got her before she left?

MARTIN

No. I don't think so. Tim neither, I think. It was hard to tell after she tackled him. There was just a lot of movement and, and shouting and, and wriggling...

ARCHIVIST

Stay with it, Martin. Tim. What happened to Tim?

MARTIN

They got split up and he ran into the office. You said that's where you made the hole. When you were recording. And they all came through, so... he's dead. He's dead in there and he's covered in worms and that's it.

ARCHIVIST

We don't know that.

MARTIN

...Maybe

Maybe, maybe he found the spare CO₂.

ARCHIVIST

Spare? What? Where? I never saw any.

MARTIN

Oh, I, er... I, I hid them in old casefile boxes.

ARCHIVIST

What, why?

MARTIN

Well, so the worms didn't know they were there!

Look, I know it's stupid.

ARCHIVIST

Yes. Yes it is. They're just... they're just unclassified parasites. They don't have consciousness, they can't plan, they're just an unthinking infection.

MARTIN

Seriously?!

ARCHIVIST

What?

MARTIN

Why do you *do* that?

ARCHIVIST

Do what?

MARTIN

Push the sceptic thing so hard!? I mean, it made sense at first, but now? After everything we've seen, after everything you've read! I hear you recording statements and y-you just dismiss them. You tear them to pieces like they're wasting your time, but half of the "rational" explanations you give are actually more far-fetched than just accepting it was a, a ghost or something. I mean for god's sake John, we're literally hiding from some kind of worm... queen... thing, how, how could you possibly still not believe!?

ARCHIVIST

Of course, I believe. Of course I do. Have you ever taken a look at the stuff we have in Artefact storage? That's enough to convince anyone. But, but even before that... Why do you think I started working here? It's not exactly glamorous. I have...

I've always believed in the supernatural. Within reason. I mean. I still think most of the statements down here aren't real. Of the hundreds I've recorded, we've had maybe... thirty, forty that are... that go on tape. Now *those*, I believe, at least for the most part.

MARTIN

Then *why* do you—

ARCHIVIST

Because I'm scared, Martin!. Because when I record these statements it feels... it feels like I'm being watched. I... I lose myself a bit. And then when I come back, it's like... like if I admit there may be any truth to it, whatever's watching will... know somehow. The scepticism, feigning ignorance. It just felt safer.

MARTIN

Well... It wasn't.

ARCHIVIST

No. No, it wasn't.

Still, it's not *my* fault we're going to be eaten by worms. Speaking of, can you see anything?

MARTIN

Not much. They're just... there.

ARCHIVIST

How many?

MARTIN

Too many. And more keep coming up through the floor. I didn't think they could get through.

ARCHIVIST

Prentiss?

MARTIN

No, I can't s... Oh, there she is.

ARCHIVIST

What's she doing?

MARTIN

I don't know. She's messing with the boxes. She's holding one up and... ahh!

ARCHIVIST

What?

MARTIN

She's... She's destroying them. Sort of.

ARCHIVIST

Sort of?

MARTIN

Well, I don't really know what that stuff coming out of her mouth is, but I think we should probably burn them.

ARCHIVIST

Right.

Right.

...

Why are you here Martin?

MARTIN

Well, well, Prentiss is out there and you can't run
so—

ARCHIVIST

I mean at the Archive in general. Why haven't you quit?

MARTIN

Are you giving me my review now?

ARCHIVIST

No... We're clearly doing a whole heart-to-heart thing and, truth be told, the question's been bothering me. You've been living in the Archives for four months, constant threat of... this. Sleeping with a fire extinguisher and a corkscrew. Even you must be aware that that's not normal for an archiving job? Why are you still here?

MARTIN

[Considering] Don't really know. I just am. It didn't feel right to just leave. I've typed up a few

resignation letters, but I just couldn't bring myself to hand them in.

I'm trapped here. It's like I can't... move on and the more I struggle, the more I'm stuck.

ARCHIVIST

Martin...You're not, uh... You didn't die here, did you?

MARTIN

What? What? N-No... what?!

ARCHIVIST

No, I just... No, just the way you phrased that...

MARTIN

Made you think I was a *ghost*?

ARCHIVIST

No... it's—

MARTIN

No, no... it's just that whatever web these statements have caught you in, well, I'm there too. We all are, I think. [Sigh]

...

A ghost? Really?

ARCHIVIST

[Tiredly] Shut up Martin.

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

[FIRE ALARM IS SOUNDING]

ELIAS

Right, tell me again, please.

SASHA

You're kidding.

ELIAS

You did bring a tape recorder. I just thought John would appreciate as many supplementary recordings as possible. For the record.

SASHA

Well, for the record, if we don't do something now, it won't matter either way.

ELIAS

So... these are the worms he and Martin have been going on about?

SASHA

The ones terrorising us for months? Yeah!

ELIAS

To be honest I always thought they were just... overreacting. Other staff have seen them around, but no-one's reported any aggressive behaviour or anything like that. You know how those two are... John puts on a good show, but sometimes I swear he's worse than Martin.

SASHA

Look, Elias. I don't know what you think is going on, but I have just seen thousands of... fleshworms pouring out of the wall! God knows how long they've been hiding! Tim might be dead, and the others...

ELIAS

Of course. The fire alarm was a good move, but it does mean most staff have evacuated, so we'll deal have to with them ourselves.

SASHA

There are thousands of them, Elias.

ELIAS

Not quite what I meant. On John's insistence I recently changed the Archive's fire suppression system to use carbon dioxide. Should have done it years ago, really—

SASHA

So why hasn't it gone off?

ELIAS

Because there isn't an actual fire.

SASHA

Right, right. Can we set it off manually? I think John's got a lighter somewhere.

ELIAS

He's not smoking again, is he? Anyway, it shouldn't be necessary. There is a manual release, a few floors down.

SASHA

Wait. Wait. Will it hurt Martin or John?

ELIAS

Almost certainly. Er, I'm not a doctor, but I know dumping a lot of CO₂ on people isn't generally considered a good idea. I really don't want to have to find another Archivist so quickly after Gertrude, but from what you say... it might be a mercy. You know the situation best, so...?

SASHA

Let's go.

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

[FIRE ALARM CAN BE HEARD... AS CAN SOUND
OF BANGING ON WALL]

MARTIN

I thought that wall was meant to be solid?!

ARCHIVIST

So did I. We don't have any sort of weapon, do
we?

MARTIN

I mean... I mean, I suppose we could use—

ARCHIVIST

Don't say the corkscrew!

MARTIN

Okay.

ARCHIVIST

How many of them are outside of the door?

MARTIN

I don't know. I can't see because the window is covered in worms.

ARCHIVIST

Right. Right. Damn. Well, Martin I guess this is—

[SOUND OF PLASTERBOARD AND TILE
BREAKING]

TIM

Hi guys!

MARTIN

Tim!

ARCHIVIST

Tim?! What the hell? I thought... how did you...?

MARTIN

You made it!

TIM

Funny story really. I ran into the office, worms everywhere, horrible death and everything, tripped and fell in some boxes and there were like 20 cans of gas in there.

MARTIN

Are, are you alright? You seem a bit...

TIM

Fine! Fine! Gas... bit light-headed. Not a lot of ventilation in the tunnels. Come on!

ARCHIVIST

In-Into the tunnels?

TIM

Yeah! Actually, not that many worms in there anymore. I think they've mostly gone into the Archive. Although the ones down here are faster for some reason. And quieter.

ARCHIVIST

You're not bitten, are you?

TIM

No, I don't think so! Have a look!

ARCHIVIST

Yes, alright Tim, you look fine. Put them back on, please.

MARTIN

Can can you walk, John?

ARCHIVIST

No, I can limp.

TIM

Then let's go!

ARCHIVIST

Martin, could you pass me the tape recorder?

MARTIN

Sure. I think it's running out, though.

ARCHIVIST

Fine. I suppose I can turn it back on when we're being eaten alive.

TIM

Why *do* you have a second tape recorder, Martin?

MARTIN

Oh, um... well, I've been using it to record myself. I write poetry and I think the tapes have a sort of... low-fi charm.

ARCHIVIST

...

I see.

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

SASHA

[SPEECH IS ECHOED FROM THE ROOM AS SHE WALKS]

[With some despondency in tone] Okay, John. I know you'll want to know what's been happening. If you're still alive after this. The worms are on the upper floor. Not as many as down in the Archive, but enough.

I set the fire alarm off, so everyone's evacuated except me and Elias. I didn't see any signs of the fire brigade, but I haven't been near a window in a while. There was a... I guess you'd call it a... a wave of worms. I got cut off from Elias. I hope he made it to the fire system, but who knows. Maybe everyone's dead already.

I've had to retreat into Artefact Storage. That should tell you something about how bad it is out there.

God, I hate this place.

Did I ever tell you I first joined the Institute as a practical researcher? I had to analyse and investigate all the stuff in here. Take notes after sleeping in the rusted chair, write in the memory book, all that sort of thing. I transferred after three months. Would've quit, but couldn't afford to back then.

Never understood why they keep this stuff secret. I mean, we've, we've enough here to send any sceptic packing, but it's just locked away. I... I asked Elias about it once, but he just muttered something about funding and mission statements. He's good at changing the subject, isn't he?

Sorry. I'm rambling. No worms, though, so that's good.

Oh, hey. I've found... I've found that table you were talking about. Don't really see what all the fuss is about. Just a... basic... optical illusion. Nothing special... just... just a... wait...

[Hushed and panicked] John! John, I think there's someone here. Hello? I see you. Show yourself.

[DISTORTION INTENSIFIES]

[SASHA SCREAMS, TAPE RECORDER DROPS]

[DISTORTION FADES TO A CRACKLE]

NOT!SASHA

[Words warped] Hello?

I see you.

[FOOTSTEPS]

[Clearly] I see you.

[CLICK]

[CLICK]

[WATER DRIPS]

ARCHIVIST

Update. I don't know how long we've been down here. These tunnels are a maze, and we don't know where we are. We have four of the--

TIM

Martin's gone.

ARCHIVIST

I'm getting to that. Martin has disappeared. Tim was right about there being fewer worms down here, but they are much faster. More aggressive. None of us have been hit yet but... during one of the more alarming encounters, Martin ran off.

TIM

He thought we were behind him, I think.

ARCHIVIST

He didn't think at all. Tim was with me, and my leg slowed me down. He must have taken a turn we didn't see or something. We lost him. But, Tim has managed to find what looks to be an actual trapdoor, so... we won't need to bludgeon our way through any more drywall. I'm recording this in case—

TIM

In case the trapdoor opens back into the Archives
and Prentiss is there to kill us.

ARCHIVIST

In as many words, yes. Tim?

TIM

Alright

[TRAPDOOR IS PUSHED OPEN TO SOUND OF
FIRE ALARM AND LOTS OF WRITHING]

PRENTISS

Archivist

TIM

Ah.

ARCHIVIST

Shit.

[CLICK]